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ABSTRACT

This paper, written by the research historian with the Elementary Economics Project, focuses upon the experience of that project in its attempts to develop new curriculum materials for pupils and teachers. The major point of the project is to integrate history, economics, and geography within multimedia units or modules which can be used separately, and yet have a unifying theme. Recent field trials indicate that children are learning economic concepts as well as other social concepts from the new units. The paper closes with the following recommendations to the historical profession: 1) historians must work more directly with teachers in the creation of teaching materials, to the point of using or observing the use of materials in classrooms; 2) historians and teachers should work together to help eliminate an apparent bias against non-textual material evidenced by so many publishers; 3) All social studies materials, especially those based on history, should be reviewed and revised periodically. (Author/AWW)

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HISTORY AS AN INTEGRATIVE DISCIPLINE

Gerald C. Mattran
William D. Rader

Paper delivered at: American Historical Association
Annual Meeting, December 28-30, 1971, in New York

ELEMENTARY ECONOMICS PROJECT

INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS CENTER / THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

HISTORY AS AN INTEGRATIVE DISCIPLINE

Gerald C. Mattran
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We are about to inflict upon humanity one more definition of history, even though we are aware that history may be the most often defined single idea in any anthology of pithy sayings. Our definition is different from most, however, because it is functional rather than philosophical. We are concerned with the uses of history in the elementary classroom. More specifically, we are concerned with the ways in which history can be used to enhance the educational experience of elementary school students.

During the past six years, the Elementary Economics Project of the Industrial Relations Center of The University of Chicago has been preparing teaching materials for elementary pupils in the area of economics. Originally, little effort was made to relate the economics materials to the traditional core subjects of the social studies curriculum--history and geography. This failure to capitalize on existing curriculum resulted in an economics program which went largely unused by elementary schools in the United States, thus reducing the impact of our program on the nation's students. A workshop with a group of teacher advisors helped us to decide that one road to success with social studies curriculum was through the use of history in concert with economics. But, before the melody could be orchestrated, we played several false notes, which were probably necessary learning experiences.

We termed our first attempt the Traditional Phase, since the variations from past methodology were relatively few and none were particularly radical. The plan was to teach economic concepts by teaching history. The material was textual and narrative, based on three geographical-chronological focuses divided into episodes called stories. A few new devices, such as games and role plays, were used; some with effectiveness, others inexpertly. A well-designed role-play, for example, was an effective way to communicate the meaning behind

well-known or assumed historical "facts." One based on Columbus and Queen Isabella caused students to involve themselves more with the characters as human beings, rather than with the cartoonish oversimplications depicted in the popular culture. A card game was a successful way to help students remember dates and the names of people, but the need for symmetry in the game design required undue emphasis on relatively minor individuals.

Observations in several classrooms indicated that the unit was over-historied. Our use of the post-holing method lacked what Paul Ward has called the fence: "...the careful building of connections between the posts or historical events."[1] We had expected that economics would be the fence, but we did not provide the materials with which to construct it. While we did a good job of teaching history in the unit, that was not our goal. History intruded upon the economics. Our observations and feedback from teachers indicated that students did not learn the economic concepts that were supposed to be learned from the unit. We were pleased with the post-holing technique, however, and with the reactions of students and teachers to the multi-media materials which were developed with the units.

Our experience in the Traditional Phase led us directly to the Structural Phase. In the 1969-70 school year, an entirely new unit was developed and tested in the classrooms. We reasoned that if history and economics were to be integrated, integration should begin right from the planning stage. For the first time, then, an economic theme was determined which we called Economic Growth and Development. Using this theme as a guide, an elaborate structure was created which, hopefully, would facilitate the clear exposition of the economic ideas and historical examples that were to be part of the unit. Our purpose was to intertwine history with economics, enabling students to gain an understanding of men in their time. Or, as Paul Ward has phrased it, "...bring into existence the analytical tools that enable us to discern...the all important difference between truth and falsehood...getting youngsters to go on learning

wisely from past experience throughout their lives."[2]

There was an increase in the amount of non-textual material used. Among the more significant improvements was the addition of the simulation game Subsistence. The game was important both as a newer method of teaching and as a means of introducing more teaching/learning concepts. History and economics were the subjects to be taught through use of Subsistence, but we found in the classroom that group leadership and social interaction were introduced through the medium of the game as well. A tape-recorded version of an Iroquois prayer served as a useful attention-getting device in that part of the program which used the pre-Columbian American Indians to exemplify some economic concepts. The prayer, in a printed version, also aided in creating the lesson sequence. In another part of the unit, original source documents from early Boston were used to help students understand the nature of indentured servitude and apprenticeship.

In the Structural Phase, we began our use of historical examples with North American pre-history. In Subsistence and the material that accompanied the game, the lives of Paleo-Indian and Archaic men were recreated from those facts now available. And the material was presented to students as a recreation from facts now known by anthropologists. In the introduction to a story about Ugh-wump--the Archaic period character we created--we state for the students, "We do not know that all of the things in the story happened just the way they are told. We do not have written records that go that far back. The story is based on what archaeologists have learned from the remains found at the Folsom Site in New Mexico." We felt that students need not be shielded from the inability of humanity to know some things.

We attempted to create an integrated structure combining economics and history, allowing both to flow smoothly from our starting point to a clear finish, with both proceeding at the same pace toward that goal, and with neither making it more difficult to teach the other. We did not succeed in doing this. In the Structural Phase, students learned more economics than

they had in the Traditional Phase, and they learned more about history as well. Nor did the history obscure the economics lessons as it had before. But our emphasis on structure tied us to developing what would have had to be a long economic history. We felt, and our teacher-advisors agreed, that we would need a program of not more than ten weeks long to fit into existing curriculum. But, pilot test experience showed us that, with the structure we had, to accomplish the teaching of the economic concepts needed to develop our Economic Growth and Development theme, it would take two or three times that long. We had either to build a longer program than we had planned, or leave out some of the things we wanted in it.

To solve the problem, we sought the advice of our advisors and consultants once again. This process and the fortuitous addition of some talented staff members, enabled us to reach the last stage in the development of our program: the Modular Phase. The program is now consistent with our charge: to create effective economic curriculum for the elementary schools. It is, however, neither traditional in approach nor structured to the point of over-organization. It now consists of five separate modules, tied together by a common economic orientation; not a structure, an orientation. That is, each module attempts to respond pedagogically to a single guiding economic idea, which we can state as a question: How has humanity responded to economic scarcity? We do not directly answer the question in any single module or in any combination of modules. It is, rather, a question that guides development. Each module developer worked independently, free to explore the teaching possibilities in her or his own geographic post-hole, with the single economic question as a preliminary guide. Few limitations were placed on length of module, methodology, teaching devices or teaching philosophy to be used.

Staff interaction, both formal and informal, caused certain other ideas to be accepted as development guides. History was treated as what Philip Phenix calls a synoptic discipline, i.e., one "...having an integrative function, uniting meanings from all of the realms into a unified perspective."[3] Further,

we used what we called "an inquiry method." Our definition of this term would have to start with Edwin Fenton's statement in Teaching the New Social Studies:

> As historians engage in research, they often put the implications of a social science model, a generalization developed from previous research, or an earlier instance of a similar pattern of development in the form of an analytical question which guides their search for data. These questions lead to hypotheses. They can be validated, revised or rejected by using historical data in accordance with the rules of critical thinking. The development and validation of hypotheses are the heart of the mode of inquiry in the social studies.[4]

We might summarize our strategy as: attracting the student's attention, stimulating his interest, arousing his curiousity and inciting action to fulfill that curiosity. We might. But since these are the functions of advertising, we won't. Our teaching strategy became to provide material that caused students, with the direction of the teacher, to ask questions about that material. Sufficient materials are provided to allow the students to indulge the interests thus created, and to answer many of their own questions. The degree to which questions outside the immediate scope of the module are allowed is at the discretion of the teacher.

Five modules and two simulation games now form the program which is tentatively entitled Progress and People. A revised version of the simulation game, Subsistence, starts the program. This is followed by Before America, an anthropology-based treatment of pre-history. Then, in order, come: Iroquois, using the life of American Indians both before Columbus and now as postholes; Matthew, which tells about personal economic decisions in early New England colonies; Macuto and Jacques, which uses historical examples from Africa and of slavery in the Americas; and Pullman in 1894, descriptions of the railroad car and the community designed by George M. Pullman. The program ends with the simulation game Economy, which becomes a culminating lesson for the entire program. Each module has a specific economic concept which it develops: resources in Before America, scarcity in Iroquois, trade in Macuto and Jacques,

specialization in Matthew and technology in Pullman in 1894.

The five modules and two games explore much of presently available teaching technology. A tape-recorded dramatization in Macuto and Jacques helps students to understand the human as well as the economic side of slavery. Matthew begins with a "Planning Pamphlet" in which students make decisions similar to those made by colonists who left England to settle here. Pullman in 1894 contains a simulated newspaper, historically re-created, through which students formulate beginning research questions. Some Iroquois illustrations have been done by a member of that tribe specifically for the module. Much of the material is being published for the first time. Some photographs of Pullman cars, for example, have not been published since they were placed in the company's file of glass plates. A sensitive janitor saved them from destruction a few years ago, and now they are safe in the Smithsonian, where we acquired use of them.

Our use of multi-media materials is not contrived. The Pullman newspaper and photographs, for example, are not in the unit only because they are deviations from the traditional approaches. After the newspaper and the teacher have guided students to ask researchable questions, they use the pictures, along with reproduced primary documents and historical data in topically organized research packages, to answer the questions. We have eliminated some materials that were not providing value equal to their cost. Two posters used in the pilot test of the Pullman module were supposed to help direct students to ask questions about Pullman railroad cars and the town of Pullman. Elimination of the posters in one classroom made no difference that we were able to see. Although the posters were attractive, they have been left out of the revised version of the unit.

One of the major differences between the final product and our earlier attempts is the smooth integration of economics with history and with social concepts. The modular method allowed for uncontrived, unselfconscious inclusion of such ideas as leadership, the nature of community and the inhumanity of slavery, without unreasonable intrusion upon our primary assignment to teach

basic economic concepts. Realizing that we could not create a value-free program, we began to examine the affective aspect of our materials. We changed the title from The Progress of People to the present Progress and People, to avoid equating economic progress with human progress so directly. A questionnaire to students showed us that very few identified George M. Pullman with any but the most positive of historical and real characters--Abraham Lincoln, Benjamin Franklin, fathers and grandfathers. There was one student who identified Pullman with his principal and another who refered to Mayor Daley, but we are uncertain of how to categorize these responses. We have not gone very far in this area. We can say that more work needs to be done in the affective and behavioral aspects of curriculum development.

Although this Modular Phase is the last in the development of our economics program, it is by no means the final solution. In the six years leading toward this phase, we have ourselves gone through a learning process. The conclusions we have reached may serve as guides for you to take the work further. Our experience shows that traditional history was not a viable basis for teaching economic concepts, nor was a structure based on attempting an integration of history and economics desirable. The method we found most effective was to use historical examples, but with the organization of the program based on a guiding theme: in our case, economic scarcity. We feel that the techniques can be applied in other ways: to a study of the nature of society in junior high, for example.

Our use of history to help teach other disciplines, we find, responds to urgings of historians (and others) going back at least to 1925, when Harry Elmer Barnes, in The New History and the Social Sciences, said, "...there should be at least a preliminary attempt to set forth the interrelationships of history and the social studies, and the mutual contribution which each has made or can make to the other,"[5] and continues through Edgar Bruce Wesley's call, "Let's Abolish History Courses."[6] In Progress and People, we teach a specific discipline--economics--while showing how that discipline relates to other social disciplines,

using history as a source of examples, consistent with the charge of Krug, Poster and Gillies:

> ...History must be looked upon not as an accumulation of facts to be studied and taught as an unrelated mass of information, but as a particular way to organize knowledge of past human experience. Historians ...can appeal to a wide variety of human intelligences and interests... and they can (and if they are wise, do) entertain their reading public.[7]

You will be among those who must judge the conclusions represented by our completed program. If you consider them to be valid, you may agree with some specific recommendations we are going to make to the historical profession through you.

1. Professional historians must work more directly with teachers in the creation of teaching materials, to the point of using or observing the use of materials in classrooms. Too many of us have been content to perform our research and hope that by publishing it, our work will find its way to increase knowledge at all levels. In short, we need more Fentons, Krugs and Browns.

2. Historians and teachers should work together to help eliminate an apparent bias against non-textual materials evidenced by so many publishers. If the text-book is to take its place alongside the horn-book as a quaint--but out-of-date--teaching device, we must encourage publishers to use their considerable abilities to find the technology to reduce the costs of varied materials, and thus make them more accessible.

3. All social studies materials, and especially those based on history, should be reviewed, and probably revised, periodically. While history itself may not change, our knowledge of history and the ways in which it can be used does change. Greater experience with affective learning, multi-media devices, and utilization of inductive approaches can change materials...and should.

Our program has been funded from the outset by grants from the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation. Because of their willingness to allow us to experiment, we may have learned some approaches that will be of value to you, and through

you to students. As a result of our experience, we think that a valid functional definition of history can be: The integrative vehicle through which students can come to understand and appreciate the capabilities of man in relationship to his time.

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FOOTNOTES

[1]Paul Ward, "The Awkward Social Science: History," Social Science in the Schools, edited by Irving Morrissett and W. William Stevens, Jr. (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston Inc., 1971), p. 31.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Philip Phenix, Realms of Meaning (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1964), p. 235.

[4]Edwin Fenton, Teaching the New Social Studies in Secondary Schools (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1966), p. vii.

[5]Harry Elmer Barnes, The New History and the Social Studies (New York: The Century Company, 1925), p. ix.

[6]Edgar Bruce Wesley, "Let's Abolish History Courses," Phi Delta Kappan, Vol. XLIX, No. 1 (September, 1967).

[7]Mark M. Krug, John B. Poster, William B. Gillies III, The New Social Studies (Itasca, Illinois: F. E. Peacock Publishers, Inc., 1970), p. 167.